

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PEKING 2674

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y TEXT (PARA 4)

FOR: EA/PRCM

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SEDU, AFSI

SUBJ: FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR DIPLOMATS IN PRC

REF: THAYER-SYLVESTER CONVERSATION JULY 31

1. SUMMARY. THIS MESSAGE DISCUSSES PROGRAMS UNDERTAKEN BY OTHER COUNTRIES TO GIVE CHINESE LANGUAGE TRAINING IN THE PRC TO THEIR FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES WHO HAVE OCCASIONALLY SENT DIPLOMATS TO SCHOOL IN THE PRC ON AN AD HOC BASIS, THE ONLY COUNTRIES OPERATING MORE-OR-LESS REGULAR TRAINING PROGRAMS IN THE PRC ARE JAPAN AND AUSTRALIA. NEITHER COUNTRY IS FULLY SATISFIED WITH THE LANGUAGE TRAINING RECEIVED IN THE PRC, DUE PARTLY TO STUDENT LIVING CONDITIONS AND PARTLY TO RIGIDITIES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. WE DO NOT FEEL TRAINING IN THE PRC COULD BE AN ADEQUATE SUBSTITUTE FOR FSI/TAICHUNG. WE DO, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THAT IT COULD PROVIDE A BENEFICIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THAT TRAINING FOR A HIGHLY MOTIVATED INDIVIDUAL, AND WE SUGGEST THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF SENDING FSOS TO PEKING FOR STUDY BE EMBODIED IN ANY STUDENT EXCHANGE AGREEMENT WITH THE PRC. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SENDS 6 OR 7 FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS EVERY YEAR TO STUDY IN CHINA. THESE ARE WITHOUT EXCEPTION YOUNG DIPLOMATIC TRAINEES WHO HAVE JUST ENTERED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND HAVE NOT YET HELD A REGULAR DIPLOMATIC POST. SOME HAVE A GOOD GROUNDING IN CHINESE LANGUAGE, WHILE OTHERS HAVE STUDIES FOR ONLY A FEW MONTHS.

3. ALL THE STUDENTS GO FIRST TO HONG KONG IN JULY FOR ABOUT TWO MONTHS OF PREPARATORY TRAINING. THEY THEN PROCEED IN SEPTEMBER TO PEKING, WHERE THEY REGISTER AT THE PEKING LANGUAGE INSTITUTE AND ARE GIVEN A TEST FOR MANDARIN PROFICIENCY. THOSE WHO PASS ARE ASSIGNED TO CHINESE UNIVERSITIES, WHILE THE OTHERS CONTINUE ON AT THE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOR A FULL YEAR. STUDENTS ARE ALLOWED TO EXPRESS A PREFERENCE FOR FIELD OF STUDY, BUT THE FINAL DECISION IS MADE BY THE PRC AUTHORITIES (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION). THE STUDENTS ARE APPORTIONED TO UNIVERSITIES ACCORDING TO THE FIELD OF STUDY. THUS, ACCORDING TO A JAPANESE EMBOFF, PHILOSOPHY STUDENTS GO TO PEKING UNIVERSITY, LITERATURE STUDENTS TO FUTAN UNIVERSITY IN SHANGHAI, HISTORY STUDENTS TO NANKING UNIVERSITY, AND STUDENTS IN ADVANCED CHINESE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS TO LIAONING UNIVERSITY (SHENYANG).

4. ACCORDING TO THE EMBOFF, THERE IS NO FORMAL AGREEMENT WITH THE PRC COVERING THIS PROGRAM. THERE IS, HOWEVER, AN INFORMAL UNDERSTANDING, WHICH IN PRACTICE INVOLVES A RECIPROCAL ARRANGEMENT FOR ABOUT HALF A DOZEN CHINESE STUDENTS TO STUDY IN JAPANESE UNIVERSITIES UNDER OFFICIAL GOVERNMENTAL SPONSORSHIP (THESE CHINESE STUDENTS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT NECESSARILY FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY). THIS IS THE ONLY GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT STUDENT EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE PRC AND JAPAN. ALL OTHER JAPANESE STUDENTS IN THE PRC COME HERE
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THROUGH PRIVATE ARRANGEMENTS.

5. ALTHOUGH THE CHINESE STUDENTS GO TO JAPAN ON REGULAR PASSPORTS, THE JAPANESE STUDENTS COME HERE ON DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS. ONCE IN CHINA, THOUGH, THEY ARE REQUIRED TO CHANGE TO REGULAR PASSPORTS AND TO BE TREATED AS REGULAR FOREIGN STUDENTS. THEY ENJOY NO DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES AND ARE NORMALLY REQUIRED TO LIVE IN THE DORMITORIES. THERE HAS BEEN ONE CASE WHERE A JAPANESE DIPLOMATIC STUDENT BROUGHT HIS WIFE TO CHINA (PERHAPS THROUGH OVERSIGHT ON THE PART OF PRC AUTHORITIES). THEY LIVED IN THE MINTSU HOTEL, WITH HOTEL EXPENSES PAID BY THE JAPANESE EMBASSY. THIS APPEARS TO BE AN EXCEPTION, HOWEVER -- MARRIED JAPANESE STUDENTS HAVE NORMALLY HAD TO LEAVE THEIR FAMILIES AT HOME.

6. JAPANESE STUDENTS HAVZ STUDIES IN THE PRC FOR EITHER ONE OR TWO YEARS, THE LENGTH OF TIME DEPENDING ON SUCH FACTORS AS PRIOR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, MARITAL STATUS, AND DEGREE OF INTEREST IN AND/OR COMPATIBILITY WITH THE AUSTERE PRC STUDENT LIFE. MARRIED STUDENTS NORMALLY STAY FOR ONLY ONE YEAR, GOING ON TO HONG KONG FOR A YEAR AT

NEW ASIA COLLEGE IF FURTHER STUDY IS NECESSARY. THERE WERE TWO CASES LAST YEAR OF JAPANESE STUDENTS BEING TRANSFERRED TOTHONG KONG IN MID-YEAR, ONE AT HER OWN REQUEST, ONE AT THE REQUEST OF THE PRC AUTHORITIES BECAUSE OF THE STUDENT'S OBVIOUS INCOMPATIBILITY WITH CHINESE DORMITORY LIFE.

7. THOSE STUDENTS WHO DO STAY ON FOR TWO YEARS NORMALLY SPZND THEIR FIRST YEAR AT THE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE, AND PROCEED TO A UNIVERSITY FOR THE SECOND YEAR. THEY ARE NOT COUNTED AGAINST THE INFORMAL QUOTA OF 6-7 STUDENTS PER YEAR, WHICH REFERS ONLY TO THOSE ENTERING THE PROGRAM. THUS THIS YEAR THERE WILL BE NINE JAPANESE DIPLOMATIC STUHENTS HERE -- SIX NEW STUDENTS AND THREE WHO ARE RETURNING FOR THEIR SECOND YEAR.
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8. THE AUSTRALIAN PROGRAM IS LESS STRUCTURED THAN THE JAPANESE, AND IN FACT IS CURRENTLY NOT OPERATING AT ALL BECAUSE OF AN AUSTERITY PROGYAM WHICH HAS HIT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. AS EXPLAINED BY AN AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF, HOWEVER, AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY STUDENTS HAVE COME HERE AS PART OF AN OFFICIAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM WHICH SENDS FIVE GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED STUDENTS TO THE PRC EVERY YEAR. THE DIPLOMATS COUNT TOWARD THE TOTAL OF FIVE. IN RECENT YEARS, AN AVERAGE OF ONR OR TWO AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMATS HAS STUDIES IN PEKING EVERY YEAR. THEY COME WITHOUT DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS, AND LIKE THEIR JAPANESE COUNTERPARTS HAVE NO DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES. UNLIKE THE JAPANESE, THE AUSTRALIANS HAVE HIT UPON THE TECHNIQUE OF SENDING WIVES TO PEKING AS DIPLOMATIC ATTACHES. THIS ALLOWS THEM TO LIVE IN EMBASSY HOUSING, WITH THE STUHENT HUSBAND NORMAGLY SPENDING SEVERAL NIGHTS EACH WEEK WITH HIS FAMILY AND THE BALANCE IN HIS DORMITORY ROOM. PRC AUTHORITIES HAVE TOLERATED THIS PRACTICE, ALTHOUGH THE EMMOFF FEELS THEY ARE UNHAPPY ABOUT IT.

9. PROCEDURES FOLLOWDD BY AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SIMILAR TO THOSE DESCRIBED BY THE JAPANESE EMBOFF. AT LEAST IN RECENT YEARS, HOWEVER, ALL AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMATS HAVE SOUDIED IN PEKING, EITHER AT THE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE OR AT PEITA, DEPENDING ON THEIR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY. SOME STUDENTS HAVE RECEIVED FOLLOW-UP TRAINING IN HONG KONG. BEFORE THE PRESENT AUSTERITY MEASURES CALLED A HALT TO THE

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PROGRAM, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAD DRAWN UP AN ELABORATE PLAN TO TEST ALTERNATE METHODS OF TRAINING -- HONG KONG FOLLOWED BY PEKING, PEKING FOLLOWED BY HONG KONG, AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY FOLLOWED BY PEKING, ETC. -- IN ORDER TO DETERMINE WHICH YIELDED THE BEST RESULTS. THIS PLAN IS NOW IN LIMBO.

10. ADVANTAGES. THE ADVANTAGES OF CARRYING OUT LANGUAGE TRAINING IN THE PRC ARE THE OBVIOUS ONES: OPPORTUNITY FOR DAY-TO-DAY CONVERSATIONS WITH NATIVE SPEAKERS OF THE MANDARIN DIALECT AND THE ABILITY TO EXPERIENCE A SOMEWHAT MORE CHINESE ENVIRONMENT. FOREIGN STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITIES ARE ASSIGNED CHINESE ROOMMATES, ALTHOUGH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE STUDENTS OFTEN ARE NOT. FEW REAL FRIENDSHIPS DEVELOP, BUT CONVERSATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE, AS THEY ARE OCCASIONALLY WITH CHINESE PROFESSORS. IN ADDITION, UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TAKE NORMAL CHINESE CLASSES AND ARE THUS FORCED TO THINK AND TAKE NOTES IN CHINESE.

11. AN ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGE IS THAT HAVING A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER ASSIGNED TO A UNIVERSITY PROVIDES MISSIONS WITH ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT POLITICAL ARGUMENTS AND STRUGGLES TAKING PLACE ON CAMPUS, WHICH OFTEN REFLECT MORE WIDESPREAD POLITICAL STRUGGLES. THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE IMPORTANT THREE YEARS AGO THAN IT IS IN THESE RELATIVELY PLACID TIMES, BUT THE UNIVERSITIES MAY AGAIN BECOME HOTBEDS OF POLITICAL
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ACTIVITY IN THE FUTURE. OF COURSE, THE MERE EXISTENCE OF ANY AMERICAN STUDENTS, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY ARE FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS, WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARD PROVIDING THIS KIND OF ACCESS.

12. DISADVANTAGES. SOME OF THE DISADVANTAGES OF STUDY IN

THE PRC HAVE ALREADY BEEN HINTED AT IN THE DISCUSSION OF THE AUSTRALIAN AND JAPANESE PROGRAMS. SPARTAN LIVING CONDITIONS (NO AIR CONDITIONING IN SUMMER, INADEQUATE HEAT IN WINTER - CLASSROOMS ARE KEPT AT 55 DEG. -, POOR FOOD) AND SEPARATION FROM FAMILY ARE TWO THAT STAND OUT. IN THIS RESPECT, FOLLOWING THE AUSTRALIAN PRACTICE BY ASSIGNING WIVES TO USLO WOULD NOT BE A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION, SINCE WE STILL DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH APARTMENTS TO HOUSE ALL OUR REGULAR STAFF.

13. POTENTIALLY MORE SERIOUS IS THE INFLEXIBILITY OF THE CHINESE EDUCATION SYSTEM. BOTH THE JAPANESE AND THE AUSTRALIANS ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THE TYPE OF EDUCATION THEY RECEIVE. THE INSTRUCTION AT THE PEKING LANGUAGE INSTITUTE IS CRITICIZED AS INADEQUATE, WITH LITTLE OPPORTUNITY FOR GIVE AND TAKE WITH THE TEACHERS. BEYOND THAT, A STUDENT HAS NO REAL CHOICE OF HIS COURSE OF STUDY, NOR OF THE UNIVERSITY TO WHICH HE IS ASSIGNED (CHANGES OF SCHOOL HAVE IN THE PAST OCCASIONALLY BEEN ARRANGED, THROUGH INTERCESSION OF THE EMBASSY). SIMILARLY, ONCE ENROLLED IN A UNIVERSITY THERE ARE FEW POSSIBILITIES OF MEETING WITH PROFESSORS OTHER THAN YOUR OWN, AND ACCESS TO LIBRARIES HAS UP UNTIL NOW BEEN VERY POOR, ALTHOUGH THIS MAY SOON CHANGE.

14. ONE SOURCE OF FRUSTRATION TO THE AUSTRALIANS HAS BEEN THE INABILITY OF STUDENTS TO HIRE TUTORS. EMBASSY LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS, FOR INSTANCE, ARE AVAILABLE ONLY TO TEACH DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL, AND SINCE THE LANGUAGE STUDENTS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT DIPLOMATS BUT "STUDENTS," THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED TO TAKE PART.

15. GIVEN ALL THESE PROBLEMS, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT STUDY IN THE PRC IS NOT AN ADEQUATE SUBSTITUTE FOR THE FSI PROGRAM IN TAICHUNG AND IS NOT LIKELY TO BECOME SO IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THIS SHOULD NOT, HOWEVER, EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF OCCASIONALLY SENDING AN FSO TO PEKING TO SUPPLEMENT HIS FSI TRAINING, AS PREPARATION FOR A PEKING ASSIGNMENT. SUCH A TRAINEE WOULD HAVE TO BE A VOLUNTEER, HIGHLY MOTIVATED AND ADAPTABLE, AND PREFERABLY WITHOUT A FAMILY. SUCH AN INDIVIDUAL COULD, WE BELIEVE, FIND A YEAR OF STUDY AT PEKING UNIVERSITY OR SOME OTHER SCHOOL A REWARDING EXPERIENCE.

16. IF WE WANT TO HAVE THE OPTION OF SENDING SELECTED FSOS TO THE PRC FOR TRAINING, WE SUGGEST IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO INCLUDE THIS IN ANY STUDENT EXCHANGE PROPOSAL MADE TO THE CHINESE. IF A GOVERNMENT SPONSORED EXCHANGE OF STUDENTS IS TO BE WORKED OUT, THE PRC AUTHORITIES COULD BE GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE, LIKE THE AUSTRALIANS, MAY OCCASIONALLY INCLUDE A DIPLOMAT AMONG THE LIST OF AMERICAN STUDENTS.

WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BETTER TO MAKE THIS UNDERSTANDING
FAIRLY EXPLICIT NOW, AT A TIME WHEN THE PROGRAM IS BEING
SET UP AND THE CHINESE ARE EAGER FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION,
RATHER THAN LATER WHEN THE STUDENT EXCHANGE IS ALREADY AN
ONGOING PROGRAM. THE LATTER COURSE MIGHT RUN A GREATER RISK
OF CHINESE REFUSAL. THOMAS

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